



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
NORTHEAST REGION
One Blackburn Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930-2298

April 10, 2006

Dear Permit Holder:

This letter is to inform you of regulations implementing an emergency management action to immediately reduce fishing mortality on specific groundfish stocks for the start of the 2006 fishing year on May 1, 2006. **These new regulations become effective on May 1, 2006, and will remain in effect until such time as measures included in Framework Adjustment (FW) 42 to the NE Multispecies Fishery Management Plan (FMP) and FW 3 to the Monkfish FMP can be implemented, or unless you are otherwise informed.**

Amendment 13 to the FMP established a biennial adjustment process to ensure that the groundfish rebuilding program is maintained. Data from the August 2005 Groundfish Assessment Review Meeting (GARM II) indicated that current management measures are not achieving the fishing mortality objectives for several groundfish stocks, including Gulf of Maine (GOM) cod, of the Amendment 13 rebuilding programs. These stocks, therefore, require immediate reductions in fishing mortality to fully comply with the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

The New England Fishery Management Council (Council) began developing FW 42 to implement management measures that would bring the fishery back on track with the Amendment 13 rebuilding programs. However, the development of FW 42 was delayed and it cannot be implemented by the start of the 2006 fishing year (FY) on May 1, 2006. Therefore, the Secretary of Commerce developed this emergency rule to implement measures to immediately reduce fishing mortality for certain groundfish stocks beginning May 1, 2006. Combined with the measures proposed by the Council in FW 42, this emergency action should achieve the Amendment 13 fishing mortality objectives for all species during FY 2006.

This emergency action implements additional restrictions on the recreational sector to immediately reduce fishing mortality on GOM cod, as specified below. These measures are identical to those proposed in FW 42, and should achieve the Amendment 13 fishing mortality objectives for all species during FY 2006.

Seasonal GOM Cod Possession Prohibition: Private recreational vessels and vessels fishing under the charter/party regulations of the FMP are prohibited from possessing or retaining any cod from the GOM Regulated Mesh Area (RMA) (see Figure 1 below) from November 1 – March 31.

Minimum Size Restrictions: The minimum size for cod in the GOM RMA is increased to 24 inches.

Gear Stowage Requirement: Private recreational and charter/party vessels are allowed to transit the GOM RMA with cod caught from outside this area, provided all bait and hooks are removed from fishing rods and that all cod are stored in coolers or ice chests.



These storage requirements are intended to facilitate the enforceability of these recreational measures.

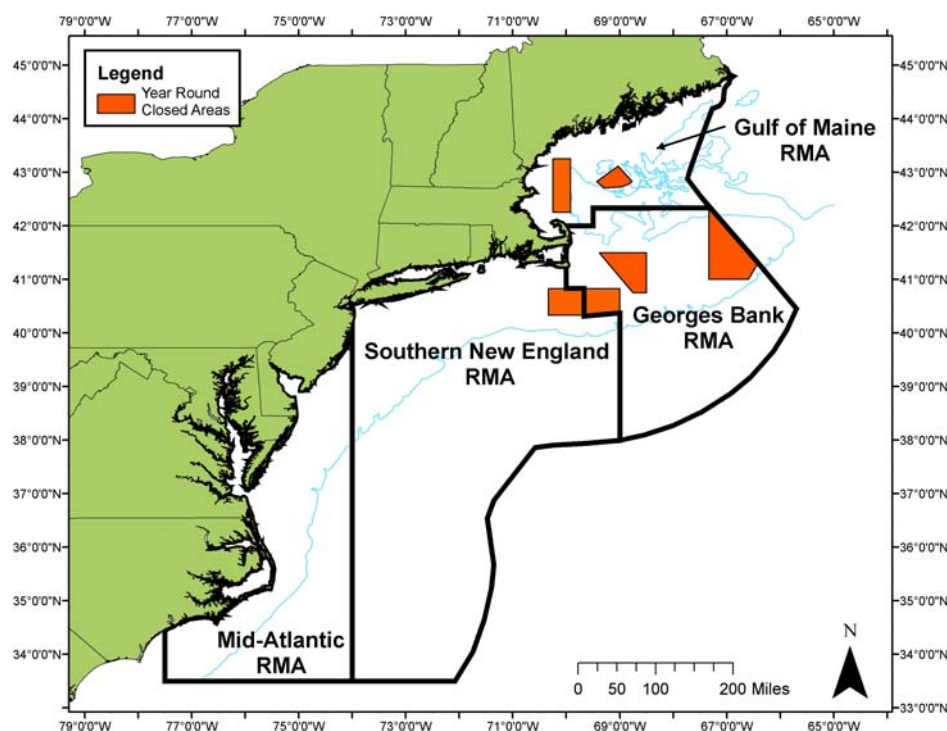


Figure 1: Regulated Mesh Areas.

This letter is only a summary of the NE multispecies regulations implemented under the emergency action, and should not be considered as a substitute for the actual regulations. To read these regulations in their entirety, you are encouraged to obtain a complete copy by calling (978) 281-9315, or by accessing the Northeast Regional Office's web page at: <http://www.nero.noaa.gov>. You may also receive permit holder letters by e-mail by clicking on "Permit Holder Letters" at the same website, or via fax by providing a fax number through a written request to the above address, or by faxing your request to 978-281-9135.

If you have any questions regarding the above measures, please contact the Sustainable Fisheries Division at (978) 281-9315.

Sincerely,

Patricia A. Kurkul
Regional Administrator

This small entity compliance guide complies with section 212 of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement and Fairness Act of 1996.